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To Dr. ----- An Answer to his Queries, concerning the COLLEDG *of* MIDWIVES.

TO answer your Query, Doctor, *Whether ever there were a Colledg of Midwives in any part of the World?* According to my Promise made the 12*th* Instant, I will now prove, there was some Hundreds, if not Thousands of Years before you can prove one of Physicians: As appears both by Sacred and Prophane Histories. I will begin with the first; and desire you to read the first Chapter of *Exodus*.

Vers. 15. *And the King of* Egypt *spake to the Hebrew Midwives, of which the Name of the one was* Shiprah, *and the other* Puah.

Vers. 16. *And he said unto them, When ye do the Office of a Midwife to the Hebrew Women, and see them upon the Stooles; if it be a Son, you shall kill him: but if it be a Daughter, then she shall live.*

Vers. 17. *But the Midwives feared God, and did not as the King of* Egypt *commanded them, but saved the Men Children alive.*

Vers. 20. *Wherefore God dealt well with the Midwives: and the People multiplied, and waxed very mighty.*

Vers. 21. *And it came to pass, because the Midwives feared God, that he made them Houses.*

I believe no Rational Person will think that these two Women could in their own Persons act as Midwives to all the Women of that *mighty People*, who about 100 Years after went up

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out of *Egypt* 600000 Fighting Men, beſides Women and Children, and a great mixt Multitude, but rather that they were the Governeſſes and Teachers of other Midwives, which could not be a few; and as I am informed by a Learned *Rabbi*, now in Town, their Names ſignify the ſame.

And the Apoſtle ſaith, *That God built them Houſes, and bleſſed them.*

Now if it were, as ſome think, that theſe were not *Iſraelites* but *Egyptians*, appointed Governeſſes over ſuch as ſhould aſſiſt the Hebrew Women, who by Converſation among them *learned the knowledg of the only true God, and fearing him, did not impoſe thoſe bloody Orders of deſtroying the Males.*

Then it was plain that the Government of that Art was regular, under Superiours, as the *Magi* and Prieſthood of that Nation was, and muſt have ſome certain place for conſulting in, from whence they might iſſue their Directions. Which, by your leave, Doctor, without Abſurdity in the Language of theſe Times, might well be called *a Colledg.*

But for the Piety of the Ruling Midwives God built them Houſes: that is, they were Incorporated into the Body of the Jews, and reckoned *Honourable Families among them:* As *Rahab* and others for their ſingular Service to that Nation afterwards were. *Which Families of the Faithful Midwives*, ſome Hebrews ſay, *continue in Honour among them at* Theſſalonica *to this Day.*

And ſuch a favour from God of *building Houſes for them*, we do not read the Phyſicians ever received; nor was Phyſick then a regular Study, nor brought under Government in that Learned Nation of *Egypt*, in *Herodotus* his time, which put together, proves the Antiquity of the Midwives Government ſo much antienter than that of the Doctors.

For your further Satisfaction be pleaſed to read *Origen* his 11*th* Homily upon *Exodus*, which will inform you, that *Shiprah* and *Puah* were not only the *Governeſſes of the Midwives*, but alſo Women of Great Learning, and excellently

skill'd

skill'd in Physick, which was then practised by Women to Women.

And you cannot deny at our last Conference, but that *Hippocrates* swears by *Apollo* and *Escalapius*, and by *Hygea* and *Panacea* the *Gods* and *Goddesses* of *Physick*: And pray, Doctor, who were the Gods and Goddesses of Antiquity, but Men and Women, who first found out and taught Arts and Mysteries so beneficial to Mankind, as made them think they could not but be guided by a Divine Spirit to the knowledg of things so useful and so far above the Vulgar Capacities This? *Hippocrates* is so ingenuous as to confess, and doth not part the *Gods* and *Goddesses*, but had them in equal Veneration, as appears by his Oath, to which I refer you, because I perceive you have forgot it; For he swears *he will not cut those that have the Stone, but will leave it to the skilful in that Practice.* But you, tho you understand nothing of it, pretend to teach us an Art much more difficult *(And which ought to be kept as a Secret amongst Women as much as is possible.)*

'Tis true among the *subtile Athenians*, some Physicians being gotten into the Government, and Miscarriages happening to some Noble Women about that time, they obtain'd a Law, that for the future no Woman should study or practise any part of Physick on pain of Death. This Law continued some time, during which many Women perished, both in Child bearing, and by private Diseases; their Modesty not permitting them to admit of Men either to Deliver or Cure them.

Till God stirred up the Spirit of *Agnodicea*, a Noble Maid, to pity the miserable condition of her own Sex, and hazard her Life to help them, which to enable her self to do, she cut off her Hair, Apparelled her self like a Man, and became the Scholar of *Hyrophilus* the most Famous Physician of that Time; and having learn'd the Art, she found out a Woman that had long languish'd under private Diseases, and made proffer of her Service to cure her, which the sick Person refused, thinking her

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to be a Man; but when *Agnodicea* had diſcovered that ſhe was a Maid, the Woman committed her ſelf into her Hands, who cured her perfectly: And after her many others with the like Skill and Induſtry. So that in a ſhort time ſhe became the Succeſsful and Beloved Phyſician of the whole Sex, none but ſhe being called to aſſiſt them.

This ſo incenſed the Phyſicians that they conſpired her Ruin, ſaying ſhe ſhaved off her Beard to abuſe the Women, who feigned themſelves Sick to enjoy her Company; *and there being Witneſſes to be found then* (as of late Years, that would ſwear any thing for Money) ſhe was upon their Teſtimony, condemned to Death for *committing Adultery* with *Agiſilea* one of the *Areopagites* Wives; it being eaſy to make Old Men, who had beautiful Wives, believe any thing of ſo young and handſome a Doctor.

This forced *Agnodicea* to diſcover her Sex to ſave her Life; and then the enraged Phyſicians accuſed her of tranſgreſſing the Law, which forbid Women to Study or Practiſe Phyſick. And for this Crime ſhe was like to be condemned to Death; which coming to the Ears of the Noble Women, they ran before the *Areopagites*, which were the Chief Magiſtrates, and the Houſe being encompaſſed by moſt Women of the City, the Ladies entred before the Judges, and told them they would no longer account them for Husbands or Friends, but for cruel Enemies, that condemned her to Death, who reſtored them to their Healths; proteſting they would all die with her if ſhe were put to Death.

This cauſed the Magiſtrates to diſanul that Law, and make another, which gave Gentlewomen leave to Study and Practiſe all parts of Phyſick *to their own Sex, giving* large Stipends *to thoſe that did it well and carefully, and impoſing ſevere Penalties upon the unskilful and negligent:* And there were many Noble Women who ſtudied that Practiſe, and taught it publickly in their Schools as long as *Athens* flouriſhed in Learning.

But

But *Phanarota* the Mother of wiſe *Socrates*, who was a Woman of great *Learning* and *Skill*, *deſerves a particular remembrance, both for her own, and her Son's ſake*; who, as it is believed by many, was a Martyr, being put to Death for profeſſing there was but *one God*, which Wiſdom himſelf ſaith he learned of his Mother. Thus, Doctor, it appears, even that Learned Idolatrous City had in it a *Midwife that knew and feared the true God:* Tho, as the Apoſtle ſaith, *there was an Altar therein dedicated to the unknown God, &c.*

This *Ambroſe Perre*, Counſellour and Chyrurgion to the King of *France*, and his Ingenuous Diſciple *Gulielmus*, prove fully: and that is as far as my ſmall Learning and weak Capacity goes. But you, Doctor, may prove it more at large when you pleaſe, by the *Hebrew*, *Greek*, *Latin* and *Arabick* Books, which treat on theſe Subjects; in which times the three parts of Phyſick, *Midwifery*, *Chirurgery*, and *the making up and adminiſtring of Medicines*, were all one, tho the laſt, which was then the ſervile part, hath now uſurp'd upon the other two; but we pretend only to the Firſt, as being the *moſt Antient, Honourable and Uſeful Part:* Wherein we deſire you not to concern your ſelves, until we deſire your Company, which we will certainly do as often as we have occaſion for your Advice in any thing *we do not underſtand, or which doth not appertain to our Practice.*

But to come into our own Country, it is not hard to prove by antient Britiſh Books and Writings, that before the *Romans* came hither here were Colledges of Women practiſing Phyſick, dedicated to ſome of the Female Deities; but whether ſo antient as the *Bards* I cannot tell, tho ſome old Britiſh Songs written in praiſe of the *Goddeſs* Truth, ſeem to prove it: but they were in the time of the *Druides*, as appears both by Britiſh and French Books, and the Name of *Wiſe Women*, by which *Midwives* are ſtill called in *France*, and moſt of the Weſtern Parts, as they are by that of *Wiſe Mother* in the

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Low-Countries, Germany, and moſt of the Northern Parts of the World.

And here in London *were Colledges of Women about the Temple of* Diana, *who was Goddeſs of Midwives here, as well as at* Epheſus. From whence the Grecians ſay, ſhe was abſent at Q. *Olympia*'s Labour, who was that Night deliver'd of *Alexander* the *Great*; where ſhe was ſo fully employed, that ſhe could not defend her Stately Temple, which was burned down by *Heroſtrateus* the Shoemaker, to perpetuate his Name.

Nor did the Biſhops pretend to Licenſe Midwives till Bp. *Bonner*'s time, who drew up the Form of the firſt Licenſe, which continued in full force till 1642, and then the Phyſicians and Chirurgions contending about it, it was adjudged a Chyrurgical Operation, and the Midwives were Licenſed at *Chirurgions-Hall, but not till they had paſſed three Examinations, before ſix skilful Midwives, and as many Chirurgions expert in the Art of Midwifery.* Thus it continued until the Act of Uniformity paſſed, which ſent the Midwives back to *Doctors Commons*, where they pay their Money, *(take an Oath which is impoſſible for them to keep)* and return home as skilful as they went thither.

I make no Reflections on thoſe learned Gentlemen the Licenſers, but refer the curious for their further ſatisfaction, to the Yearly Bills of Mortality, from 42 to 62: Collections of which they may find at *Clerks-Hall:* Which if they pleaſe to compare with theſe of late Years, they will find there did not then happen the eight part of the Caſualties, either to Women or Children, as do now.

I hope, Doctor, theſe Conſiderations will deter any of you from pretending to teach us Midwifery, eſpecially ſuch as confeſs *they never delivered Women in their Lives,* and being asked *What they would do in ſuch a Caſe?* reply *they have not yet ſtudied it,* but will when occaſion ſerves; *This is ſomething to the purpoſe I muſt confeſs, Doctor:* But I doubt it will not ſatisfy the

Women

Women of this Age, who are ſo ſenſible and impatient of their Pain, that few of them will be prevailed with to bear it, in Complement to the Doctor, *while he fetches his Book, ſtudies the Caſe, and teaches the Midwife to perform her work,* which ſhe hopes may be done before he comes.

I proteſt, Doctor, I have not Power enough with the Women to hope to prevail with them to be patient in this caſe, and I think if the Learnedſt of you all ſhould propoſe it *whilſt the Pains are on,* he would come off with the ſame Applauſe which *Phormio* had, who having never ſeen a Battel in his Life, read a Military Lecture to *Hannibal* the *Great.*

But let this paſs, Doctor, as I do the Diſcourſes you have often made to me on this Subject, and I will tell you ſomething worthy of your moſt ſerious Conſideration: Which is,

That in *September* laſt, our Gracious Soveraign was pleaſed to promiſe to unite the Midwives into a Corporation, by His Royal Charter, and alſo to found a *Cradle-Hoſpital,* to breed up expoſed Children, to prevent the *many Murders, and the Executions which attend them*; which pious Deſign will never want a ſuitable Return from God, who no doubt will fully reward his Care for preſerving ſo many *Innocents* as would otherwiſe be loſt.

And I doubt not but one way will be by giving him a Prince by his Royal Conſort, who like another *Moſes* may become a Mighty Captain for the Nation; and lead to Battel the Soldiers which the Hoſpital will preſerve for him.

And now, Doctor, let me put you in mind, that tho you have often Laughed at me, and ſome Doctors have accounted me a Mad Woman theſe laſt four Years, for ſaying Her Majeſty was full of Children, and that the *Bath* would aſſiſt her Breeding: 'Tis now proved ſo true, that I have cauſe to hope my ſelf may live to praiſe God, not only for a *Prince of Wales, and a Duke of York,* but for many other Royal Babes by Her; and if the over Officious will but be pleaſed to let them live, *I hope in*

a few Years to see them Muster their little Soldiers: Which Joyful Sight, I believe, is the hearty Desire of all Loyal Subjects, of what Persuasion soever, as it is the daily and fervent Prayer of,

From my House in Arundel-street, *near St.* Clement's *Church in the* Strand. Jan. 16. 168⅞.

Your Servant,

ELIZABETH CELLEOR.

Where the Word of a King is, there is Power: and who shall say unto him, What doest thou? Eccles. 8. vers. 4.

FINIS.

Let this be Printed,

SUNDERLAND. *P.*